

## Abstract

The present invention relates to a process by which a pectin extract is first de-esterified using a biocatalyst. Secondly, the resulting high molecular weight de-esterified pectin is further de-esterified and optionally amidated using conventional methods. Since the bio-catalyst may de-esterify to a DE of about 25%, conventional acid or alkali de-esterification and optionally amidation will have little impact on the molecular weight of the pectin in question because the number of ester groups have been substantially reduced in the first part of the process. In addition, the novel process leads to novel pectin compositions having higher molecular weight and higher intrinsic viscosity compared to known pectin compositions. These changes lead to low ester pectins providing gels of higher gel strength.